

***Gentianella tenella* Rottb.**

slender gentian
Gentianaceae (Gentian Family)

Status: State Sensitive

Rank: G4G5S1

General Description: Adapted from Hitchcock et al. (1959):

Gentianella tenella is a glabrous annual 1½ to 6 in. (4-15 cm) tall. The slender stems are simple to freely branched at the base. There are usually several oblanceolate basal leaves, which are 1/8 to 1/3 in. (3-10 mm) long. The few stem leaves are opposite, oblanceolate, and ¼ to 2/3 in. (5-15 mm) long. The flowers are 1/3 to 2/3 in. (8-15 mm) long and 4 to 5-merous. They may be single and terminal on long naked peduncles, or few to many arising from the lower leaves on elongated stalks that are up to 4 in. (10 cm) long. The calyx is at least half the length of the corolla, and deeply lobed. The two outer lobes are broader and shorter than the inner two. The corolla is white to bluish purple, and tubular. The inside surface of each lobe is fringed with two basal scales. The capsules slightly exceed the corolla's length.

Identification Tips: In Washington, *Gentianella tenella* may be confused with *Gentiana douglasiana* (also rare in Washington). Both *Gentianella tenella* and *Gentiana douglasiana* are annuals. *Gentianella tenella* has 4 to 5-merous flowers; the inside of the corolla is not pleated, and the inside of the lobes are fringed at the base, while *Gentiana douglasiana* has 5-merous flowers with inner lobe pleats and the lobes are not fringed at the base like *Gentianella tenella*. The flowering period of *Gentianella tenella* is also shorter (July through August) than that of *Gentiana douglasiana* (July through September).

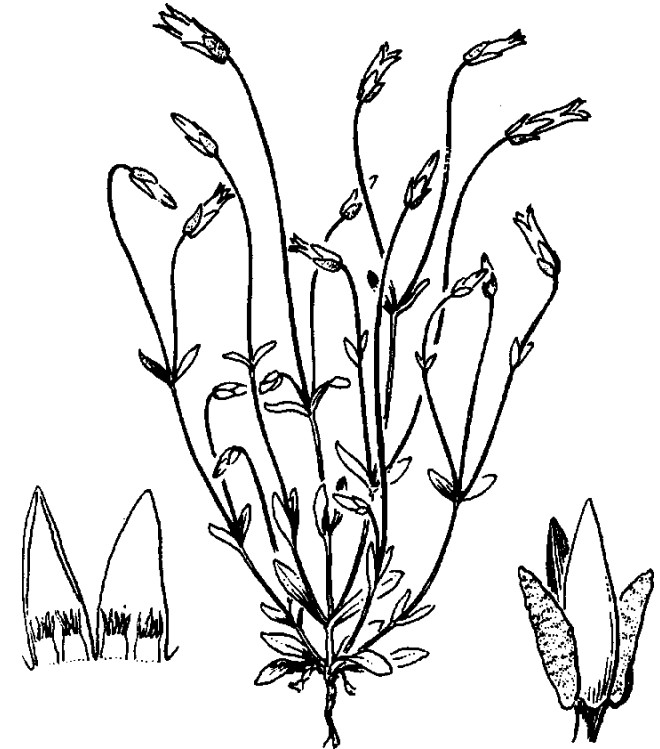
Phenology: This species flowers from July through August.

Range: This species is found in widely separated mountain ranges of Eurasia, Greenland, Alaska and Canada. It is known from Montana south to New Mexico and west to California, Oregon and Washington. In Washington it is found in Okanogan County.

Habitat: *Gentianella tenella* appears to favor disturbed sites in subalpine to alpine meadows at 6800 to 7600 feet (2072-2316 meters) elevation. It has been found growing in areas with alpine timothy (*Phleum alpinum*), diamondleaf willow (*Salix planifolia*), sedge (*Carex* spp.), shrubby cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*), yarrow (*Achillea*

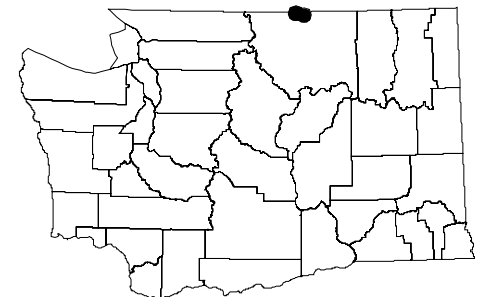
Gentianella tenella

slender gentian



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Known distribution
of *Gentianella tenella*
in Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

Gentianella tenella

slender gentian



Washington Natural Heritage Program



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millefolium), chickweed (*Cerastium* spp.), juniper moss (*Polytrichum juniperuna*), and bryum moss (*Bryum weigeli*).

Ecology: In Washington, it is found in the same vicinity as *Gentiana glauca*. Both species grow in moist, hummocky areas, but *Gentianella tenella* is never found directly on hummocks like *Gentiana glauca*. Its association with high levels of sheep dung and bare ground suggest that it responds positively to disturbance (Adams 1993).

State Status Comments: There are less than four known occurrences of *Gentianella tenella* in Washington in Okanogan County. Both the small population number and its restriction to a small geographic area contribute to its state status.

Inventory Needs: Known occurrence sites should be resurveyed for updated information.

Threats and Management Concerns: Livestock grazing (sheep and cattle) and, to a lesser extent, trampling by hikers and a subsequent increase in exotic species are the primary threats that have been identified.

Comments: *Gentianella tenella* Rottb. is synonymous with *Gentiana tenella* (Rottb.) Boerner. Hitchcock et al. (1959) refer to this species as *Gentiana tenella*.

References:

Adams, A.B., B. Crooks, and P. Williston. 1993. Distributions of interesting vascular plants in the Pasayten Wilderness, Washington, with emphasis on *Gentiana glauca* and *G. tenella* in Horseshoe Basin. Unpublished. On file with WNHP.

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, J.W. Thompson. 1959. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest Part 4: Ericaceae Through Campanulaceae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 510 pp